

ANCIENT WAYS OF HEALING

By Phil Morgan

Since the beginnings of humankind and development of the most basic social cultures, there has been a recognized need for healing. Venerated and acknowledged were those with the specific gifts or talents of being able to heal or assist others with their healing. For thousands of years the tradition of shamanism has evolved and focused on the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of the community and each of its members.

The healing practices of shamanism began from information and guidance originating in the spirit world. The shaman (male or female), faced with an unfamiliar illness or situation, would seek assistance from the spirit world through an altered state of consciousness called the 'shamanic journey'. Spirits responded as advisors or guides and taught the shaman ceremonies to alleviate pain, heal emotional wounds or physical injuries, cure illness, and assist the soul in moving on after death. Through this process the shaman's body of knowledge grew and healing practices were born. The shaman and their select students often guarded healing ceremonies and rituals as "proprietary secrets".

Today the path to a shamanic healing practice continues as it has over the centuries. To learn the traditions within a specific culture a student must submit to a rigorous and often lengthy training period after having been accepted by a teacher. The student then learns, one-by-one, the ceremonies of their lineage of shamanism, as they have been collected from the spirit world. Many times these healing practices are culturally sensitive and assume an understanding gained by growing up with the practices and stories of the people.

Another path to establish a shamanic-based healing practice is to step outside any particular tradition or culture. Like the original shaman this means building one's own traditions based on personal interactions with the spirit world. This path has some perils that following a tradition avoids. The foundation of the practice must be built one piece at a time. The steps include learning to journey, connecting with teachers and protectors in the spirit world, and creating context and form for what will be done in the physical world. Each step requires time, a great deal of it, and developing the deep level of trust necessary to surrender and fully participate on each journey. While some of this can be learned and practiced in a group setting, class or drumming circle, each person, on an experiential level, has their own path that they must walk alone. Dangers do exist and it is wise to employ as many safety techniques as possible. While many of these can be learned in shamanic journey training, others are learned through repeated experience as relationship are built with the spirits who come as teachers and guides.

During the past 26 years I have studied shamanism and my understanding of the universe and my place within it has greatly expanded. The aliveness of all things, the sacredness of life, the interconnectedness of all, and the love and support available for those of us in human form, are far greater than I had ever suspected. At 66 I realize I am just beginning

to comprehend that there is such depth and richness to life. There is a demand for healing by the universe, including my own healing, to which I must respond. The gifts of the shamanic practice go beyond my wildest dreams and continue to stretch who I am and how I perceive and relate to the world around me. If this path, this journey, calls to you, I urge you to explore it and discover its blessings.

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Over twenty years ago Phil Morgan responded to a calling to pursue his own healing and assist others who wanted to heal. His shift in careers from working with computers to working with people led him to explore shamanism. Today he has a practice teaching students and seeing clients, which takes him throughout North America and Europe.